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Planning Board  
Town of Lexington  
1625 Massachusetts Avenue  
Lexington MA 02420

RE: 186 BEDFORD STREET, LEXINGTON

Dear Board Members:

This letter is filed with the Sketch Plan submitted for meeting with the Board on Wednesday, November 28, on behalf of 186 Bedford Street, LLC, ("Petitioner") for a rezoning of the above property.

Petitioner is the Ciampa family, including Philip, the father, and his sons, Joe and Tony. The Ciampa family business, the Philip Ciampa Salon, was established in Lexington in the 1970s and is located across the street at 189 Bedford Street. The Ciampas also own 185 Bedford Street, adjacent to 189. The Ciampas propose to move their business across the street to 186 Bedford Street as part of a new building development of mixed commercial and residential use.

As shown on the attached blue and red color-coded overview rendering, 186 Bedford Street is uniquely located in a mixed-use commercial and residential neighborhood next to the strip mall in which Alexander's Pizza is a tenant. The strip mall is located in a commercial CN Neighborhood Business zone, as are the Ciampa properties across Bedford Street at 185 and 189. Across from Alexander's are commercial CLO office condos, the Knights of Columbus hall/building of various uses, and the former Liberty Mutual building property now owned by the Town of Lexington (Town) for temporary use of the Fire and Police departments.

186 Bedford Street adjoins Vaille Avenue to the side and is in a Residential RS zone with Reed Street to the rear. The proposed planned development requires Town Meeting approval of the rezoning of 186 Bedford Street from RS to Planned Development PD.

PREVIOUS MEETING AND PROPOSAL MODIFICATIONS

The Petitioner began discussion with the Economic Development Officer in October 2017. We met with Planning Director Aaron Henry on October 23. The general take-away from that meeting was that a two-lot residential subdivision as of right would not be a good result, given the possible opportunity of a modernized, planned extension of the adjacent commercial zone; the CN, CRS, and CS zones, adopted 30 years before, were becoming obsolete; and not to propose something that would generate more school-aged children.

The next meeting, on November 20, was intended to familiarize the Town Manager and staff with an actual proposal. The first proposal included a mixed-use development of a new 3,700 FT, 3-story building with 6,000 SF of commercial space on the first floor, 26 one-bedroom and 4 two-bedroom apartments on the second and third floors, while preserving the historic accessory barn for office use; and an underground parking garage. The Town Manager had requested this meeting preliminary to a "plus one" meeting with one or two members of the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board.

The plus one meeting occurred December 21 with Selectmen Lucente and Kelly, and Board Member Corcoran-Roncetti, the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager Carol Kowalski, and Planning Staff. Favorable comments were that this could be a logical extension of the adjacent CN, which was also across the street, perhaps serving as a modernized commercial upgrade of mixed use; the residential one-bedroom use could provide needed options for seniors selling and downsizing or for young people to stay in Town. Neighborhood meetings were encouraged.

Petitioner held neighborhood meetings on February 12, 2018 at the Knights of Columbus and at Town Hall on February 28 following the Town's neighborhood meeting for the Fire Department use of the Liberty Mutual building. We met very briefly with the Board following the February 28 meeting. The Board asked we meet with the neighborhood again. The neighborhood had objected to the scale of the new building and the density of development.

Petitioner was delayed in proceeding until it was able to purchase 186 Bedford Street in September from the Eliot Community Mental Health, formerly Mystic Valley Mental Health (Mystic Valley). On November 1, Petitioner held another neighborhood meeting, modifying its proposal by: reducing residential

from 30 to 26 one-bedroom units and eliminating the 4 two-bedroom units entirely; eliminating underground parking and reducing site parking from 70 to 56 spaces; and reducing length of building by 30 feet. Neighborhood sentiment focused on residential density being too high and suggesting more commercial, less residential, use that would better balance a concern over 24/7 hours activity.

Following the November 1 meeting, Petitioner has made significant modifications to the proposal as now submitted. The new building has been reduced from three floors to two floors. Residential one-bedroom apartments have been reduced from 26 to 16, all on the second floor, consisting of 15,500 GSF; the first floor, all commercial, consisting of 14,200 GSF plus access/egress stairs and corridors. The new building has a total GSF of 30,500+. It is smaller in height than the existing building which has 2½ stories compared to the 2 stories proposed. Parking has been reduced to 51 spaces. Petitioner still intends to preserve the historic accessory barn for its office use of 1,500 SF.

#### SKETCH PLAN/PSDUP

The Board's Zoning Regulations require in Section 6.12, 6.13 and 6.14, addressing the reasons for rezoning, comparison to use and development of the existing RS land by right, and compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

In general, as has been noted above, reasons for rezoning may be found in the opportunity to expand the commercial node adjacent to, and across the street from, the property with a modest, modern planned, mixed-use development as compared to the existing obsolescence of CN, CRS, CS zones adopted 30 years ago; the opportunity to address Comprehensive Plan goals of increased commercial revenue, providing more housing options for seniors and younger people; historic preservation of an accessory structure; all of which will be finalized and more fully addressed in the PSDUP filing following the "in general" objective of this Sketch Plan.

At the Sketch Plan stage, it may be helpful to note the uses the property has as of right in the existing RS District. In 1958, Mystic Valley was a non-profit educational and charitable organization who then received a Town zoning permit for use as its headquarters and operation of a community mental health clinic. In 1968 Mystic Valley obtained a Town zoning permit for additional office space to be used by 38 people. In 1971 it obtained a zoning permit to renovate the barn for use as conference rooms for staff and group therapy sessions.

Notably, such permits for a non-profit educational corporation are no longer required. State law now exempts that and other uses from local zoning; and these exemptions have been adopted and incorporated into Lexington's Zoning Bylaw in Use Table Section B, Institutional Uses B.1.01, 02, 03 which include uses for non-profit educational corporations, childcare centers, and uses for religious purposes, and which are as of right and may not be prohibited.

An analysis of Town fiscal considerations and revenue enhancement is in process and will be filed with the PSDUP. Regarding other permits, there are no Wetlands that would require an Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission. Both the main structure and accessory barn structure are on the Town Cultural Resources Inventory. Petitioner intends to preserve the accessory barn. Petitioner has applied to the Lexington Historic Commission for determination of disposition of the main structure under the demolition delay bylaw.

Petitioner's Traffic consultant has prepared a Memo included in this submittal addressing items in the Board's Zoning Regs, Sketch Plan 8.7.1.5. We anticipate a Transportation Demand Management Plan and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provisions in that regard. The Fire Department's request for secondary access has focused on the adjoining Vaille Avenue which Petitioner would consider repaving in accordance with Town Engineer, Board recommendations. Additional MOU consideration will be an affordable housing component in which petitioner is proposing 2 of the 16 apartments or 10%.

We look forward to meeting with Board on November 28 and receiving your comments, suggestions, and written recommendation following the meeting per 8.7.3 of your Sketch Plan Regs. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Edmund C. Grant

ECG/lsg

Enc.

cc: Ciampa Team



BLUE = COMMERCIAL ZONES  
RED = RESIDENTIAL ZONE

